



Going Up!: Elisha Otis's Trip to the Top (Great Idea Series)

Monica Kulling

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In 1818, seven-year-old Elisha was fascinated by farm machinery. As a young man, he tried a variety of ways to make a living, but nothing fired his imagination more than the job he found in a bed-frame factory. Soon he invented a machine that made frames four times faster than ever before. In 1852, while overseeing the construction of a new factory, he had to find a way to move heavy machinery to the second floor. He didn't trust the hoisting platform, so he invented a safety brake. It was so successful that rather than lift machine parts, Elisha decided to build "people-hoisting machines." In 1857, Elisha Otis installed his first successful passenger elevator in a five-storey department store in New York City. Before Elisha's invention, buildings were never higher than six stories. At last it was possible to build skyscrapers!

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